

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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TAGS: PINS, MX
SUBJECT: POLITICAL ASSASSINATIONS IN MEXICO

REF: MEXICO 900

1. SUMMARY: TWO POLITICAL MURDERS IN RECENT WEEKS ARE STILL BEING PLAYED UP IN THE MEXICAN PRESS. THE FIRST INVOLVED A JOURNALIST INVESTIGATING DRUG TRAFFICKING IN SINALOA, AND THE SECOND A FORMER ADMINISTRATOR AT BENITO JUAREZ UNIVERSITY IN THE TROUBLE SPOT OF OAXACA. END SUMMARY.

2. ROBERTO MARTINEZ MONTENEGRO, A JOURNALIST FOR THE DAILY EXCELSIOR, WAS KILLED ON FEBRUARY 14 BY A GROUP OF UNKNOWN ASSAILANTS. HE WAS WORKING ON A STORY ON NARCOTICS DEALERS IN CULIACAN, SINALOA, THE ACKNOWLEDGED HEADQUARTERS OF MEXICAN NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS. JOURNALISTS THROUGHOUT MEXICO HAVE RALLIED TO CALL FOR A COMPLETE INVESTIGATION OF THE DEATH OF ONE OF THEIR OWN. JOURNALISTS FROM SINALOA MET WITH SECRETARY OF GOVERNMENT REYES HEROLEZ, WHO CONDEMNED THE CRIME, AND A NUMBER OF OTHER STATE GOVERNORS CALLED FOR FULL INVESTIGATION.
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3. GOVERNOR ALFONSO CALDERON OF SINALOA, INITIALLY BELITTLED THE REQUESTS OF REPORTERS FOR POLICE PROTECTION, BUT LATER PROMISED TO PROVIDE IT AS PUBLIC CRITICISM OF HIS INITIAL RESPONSE GREW. IN A PRESS INTERVIEW, CALDERON OFFERED SEVERAL HYPOTHESES ON MOTIVES AND AGENTS OF THE CRIME: 1) POLITICAL REASONS - OFFICIALS PROTECTING DRUG

DEALERS; 2) THE POLICE - BECAUSE OF DATA MARTINEZ HAD LINKING THEM TO DRUG DEALERS; AND 3) DRUG TRAFFICKERS THEMSELVES. HE PROMISED A FULL SCALE INVESTIGATION THAT WOULD LOOK INTO LINKS BETWEEN DRUG DEALERS AND PUBLIC OFFICIALS. DURING THE INTERVIEW CALDERON CLAIMED THAT OPERATION CONDOR HAD GREAT RESULTS, AND HE HOPED IT WOULD BE EXTENDED TO THE ENTIRE COUNTRY. HE SAID THE POOR CAMPESINOS WERE TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF BY DRUG DEALERS, AND THAT TO FIGHT THE ECONOMIC ATTRACTION OF GROWING DRUGS THE GOM IS PLANNING TO INVEST US \$200 MILLION IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE AREA FROM 1978-80.

4. COMMENT: PREVIOUS MURDERS OF PERSONS INVESTIGATING OR OTHERWISE OBSTRUCTING DRUG TRAFFIC IN SINALOA ARE NUMBERED AMONG STATE'S UNSOLVED CRIMES. IF THIS ONE IS DEFINITELY SOLVED, IT COULD LIKELY HAVE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES IN THE STATE. IF IT WERE TO OCCUR AND WERE EFFICIENTLY HANDLED, COMMITMENT OF DEVELOPMENT FUNDS IN THIS QUANTITY TO SINALOA WOULD BE A POSITIVE STEP.

5. ON FEBRUARY 22 IN OAXACA, CARLOS HERNANDEZ CHAVARRIA, PROMINENT COMMUNIST PARTY MEMBER, MEMBER OF THE UNIVERSITY COORDINATING COMMISSION AND EX-SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE BENITO JUAREZ UNIVERSITY WAS MURDERED IN A GANGLAND STYLE ACTION SHORTLY BEFORE NOON IN FRONT OF HIS HOME. ONE STUDENT ACCOMPANYING HIM WAS FATALLY WOUNDED WHILE TWO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OTHERS WERE UNHARMED. ONE OF THE LATTER STUDENTS REPORTED THAT THE GUNMAN SAID THAT "THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF A CLEANUP OF WORMS AT THE UNIVERSITY". HERNANDEZ HAD RECEIVED A THREAT SIGNED BY A GROUP CALLING ITSELF THE "22 OF FEBRUARY EXECUTION COMMAND." TWO OTHER MEMBERS OF THE COORDINATING COMMISSION WHO RECEIVED TELEPHONE THREATS REQUESTED POLICE PROTECTION FOLLOWING HERNANDEZ' DEATH.

6. CHARGES OF RESPONSIBILITY ARE DIRECTED AT THE EXTREME LEFT AS WELL AS THE RIGHT. THE COORDINATING COMMISSION ACCUSED THE UNION DEL PUEBLO AND ANOTHER GROUP KNOWN AS NEZAHUALCOYOTL, DIRECTED BY RECENTLY DEPOSED RECTOR FELIPE MARTINEZ SORIANO. MEMBERS OF THESE GROUPS DENIED ANY RESPONSIBILITY. THE PCM SUGGESTED THAT HERNANDEZ WAS KILLED BY THE LEFT, THE EXTREME RIGHT, OR THE STATE, AND CALLED FOR AN END TO GOVERNMENT REPRESSION AT THE UNIVERSITY. GOVERNOR ELISEO JIMENEZ RUIZ LAUNCHED AN INVESTIGATION AND FLEW TO MEXICO CITY TO BRIEF THE SECRETARY OF GOVERNMENT.

7. COMMENT: IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT EITHER THE UNION DEL PUEBLO OR MARTINEZ SORIANO'S GROUP WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR

THE KILLINGS, DESPITE THE CHARGES OF THE COORDINATING COMMISSION. NOR DOES THE STATE GOVERNMENT SEEM A LIKELY CULPRIT, SINCE THE GOVERNOR HAS BEEN SUPPORTING THE COORDINATING COMMISSION AND PEACE AT THE UNIVERSITY IS IN HIS INTEREST. THE ATTACK PROBABLY CAME FROM EXTREMIST GROUPS ON THE RIGHT OO STEMMED FROM AN INTERNAL POWER STRUGGLE WITHIN THE COORDINATING COMMISSION ITSELF. A POWER STRUGGLE WITHING THE LEFTIST LEADERSHIP AT THE UNIVERSITY A FEW MONTHS AGO RESULTED IN SEVERAL DEATHS AND MARTINEZ' REMOVAL AS RECTOR. RIGHTIST GROUPS MAY HAVE HOPED THAT AN ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE MIGHT FORCE THE GOVERNOR TO CLOSE THE UNIVERSITY AND THEREBY REMOVE A BASE OF COMMUNIST INFLUENCE IN OAXACA. THOMPSON

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